

programs unpaid for; wars that we continued to cut taxes while we were committing our troops overseas and hundreds of billions of dollars to prosecute those wars.

Madam Speaker, we have to stop this foolish policy of spending more than we take in. Congress has consistently shown that we don't have the will to discipline ourselves when it comes to spending the revenue. Pay-as-you-go legislation is a tool that will put us back on the right path to fiscal responsibility. It worked in the past, as others have said, put in place first by George W. Bush, Sr., along with the Democratic Congress, and then later on by President Clinton with the Republican Congress. We can do it again if we work in a bipartisan way. This is a great first step, though.

For those who criticize the legislation as having too many exemptions, I'm very pleased to hear Mr. RYAN and others say they've changed their tune about exemptions, because I've got some vote sheets here that show that they voted to enact spending programs or mandatory programs that we had paid for, but they voted against the bill when it's paid for and then voted for it when it's not paid for. So I assume that means that they have taken a different approach into how we're going to do business in the future. This pay-as-you-go legislation not only will encourage that, but will require it statutorily.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of this resolution. Not because it is good practice for us to continue increasing the national debt limit, but because for the first time since it expired under the previous administration, we are making PAYGO a statutory requirement.

In addition to other efforts by the Obama administration and Congress, PAYGO requirements will help us get our financial house back in order from the mess that was handed to us by the previous administration.

After two wars, and tax cuts that were not paid for, the \$5.6 trillion dollar surplus we experienced in 2000 turned into a \$1.3 trillion deficit.

In the 1990s, the Clinton administration turned the deficits accumulated in the two previous presidencies into record surpluses. One of the key tools in this transformation was the PAYGO rule, which required Congress to find savings for the dollars it spent.

Unfortunately, after President Clinton left office, the next administration and Congress regularly waived PAYGO rules and ultimately allow them to expire in 2002.

After waiving and allowing these rules to expire, we saw the surplus built by the Clinton administration vanish, and deficit spending resume—spending that will have to be repaid by our children and grandchildren.

A New York Times analysis attributes 90% of that deficit to the economic downturn, Bush administration policies, and the extension of those policies. According to that analysis, only 7% of the deficit is attributable to the Economic Recovery Act passed early last year, which economists largely agree was a necessary emergency response to this recession.

Madam Speaker, this is just good policy. For eight years, under the previous adminis-

tration, we saw deficit spending spiral out of control. Now many of those responsible for that spending are criticizing the majority and the current administration for its spending policies, complaining that it is piling up debt for the next generation.

Today those individuals have a chance to vote for legislation that ensures any future programs are paid for, and reestablish the rules that led to control in government spending and budget surpluses in the 1990s.

I am an original cosponsor of the PAYGO legislation that passed the House last July, and I urge all my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill to set our nation back on a path to sustainable spending policies that will ensure we do not have to continue increasing the debt limit indefinitely.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of the provisions in the bill before the House that restore the pay-as-you-go budget rules.

The PAYGO rules simply require that new entitlement spending and new tax cut proposals be fully paid for with offsetting savings. Failure to do so would result in mandatory spending cuts. These rules were instrumental to the successful effort to rein in soaring deficits in the 1990s and resulted in balanced budgets during the final years of the Clinton administration. Unfortunately, the pay-as-you-go rules expired in 2002 and the Bush administration and the then Republican majority in Congress refused to renew them. Our nation's fiscal health has paid a heavy price for that refusal.

Yesterday, the House Ways and Means Committee heard testimony from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget. Specifically, Dr. Orszag testified that the large deficits we confront today in large measure reflect the failure to pay for policies in the past. Dr. Orszag said, "More than half of these deficits can be linked to the previous administration's failure to pay for the 2001/2003 tax cuts and the prescription drug bill. Over the next ten years, these two unpaid-for policies are slated to add \$5.8 trillion to the deficit, including interest expense on the additional associated debt."

Returning to the budget discipline of the pay-as-you-go rules is common sense and will help ensure that we don't repeat the reckless tax and spending mistakes of the past.

Mr. HOLT. Madam Speaker, I rise today to discuss our national debt.

Let's look at the facts of how we got here. Just 10 years ago, the National Debt clock was turned off and we were having serious conversations about what would happen after we paid down the debt. Our nation was running a budget surplus in 1998, starting a stretch of surpluses that lasted through 2001. Our nation's fiscal house was in order. How then, have we gone from surpluses to significant deficits?

Some would have us believe that the national debt suddenly appeared in the past year. If only it was that easy. The national debt level we see today is the result of 8 years of poor decisions. Earlier this decade, the Republican-controlled Congress voted to slash taxes for the wealthy and charge it to the national debt. The same party voted to create a prescription drug benefit and charge the entire cost to the national debt. I voted against both of these laws because they were fiscally irresponsible. The previous President

decided to pursue two wars on borrowed money and charge it to the national debt. In contrast, the policies that we have adopted this Congress to pull our economy out of the recession are responsible for less than 16 percent of this and last years' deficit.

Because of the irresponsible decisions of the recent past, we entered this recession with our fiscal house not in order. With our economy nearing collapse, our government had a choice to make. Facing the worst economic crisis in 75 years, we could have done nothing. Yet, this was not a responsible option. During times of great hardship, our government cannot shrink away from helping our citizens and helping our economy recover. This required federal investment. Leading economists have made clear that these investments were vital and that the best way to reduce the deficit in the long-term is through a strong economy.

One major reason for the debt we see today is because President Bush and the Republican-controlled Congress allowed the "pay-as-you-go" law to expire. Every family understands this principle—you must pay for what you buy. I am saddened that Congress forgot this simple lesson earlier this decade. This is only one tool, but it is a strong one to return our nation back to fiscal stability. It forces Congress to identify inefficient or ineffective programs whose funding can be cut to fund higher priorities, such as health care, education, and clean energy.

The bill we consider today restores this budgetary safeguard and makes the "pay-as-you-go" principle law. In the 1990s, the last time that "pay-as-you-go" was the law, we turned the massive deficits of the 1980s into record surpluses. In 2007, I was pleased that the House of Representatives restored this principle in the House rules when Democrats regained control of the House. While this rule was a good first step, today's legislation goes further by applying automatically to legislation and will cut spending if Congress does not do so.

In addition, this bill would require the Government Accountability Office, GAO, to review all programs and initiatives to find any duplicative or wasteful programs. The GAO would report what they find to Congress so that we can eliminate the wasteful programs and merge any duplicative ones.

I will continue to work to ensure taxpayer money is well spent. I helped write the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act, which will reduce our debt by \$10 billion by eliminating wasteful subsidies for banks to offer student loans. I am pleased that many other major bills being considered, including health reform and climate legislation, have been paid for and would reduce the debt as well. I have fought every year to cut billions from the flawed missile defense program, which never produced a reliable technology; I have supported reducing agricultural subsidies that too often go to the wealthiest producers instead of small family farmers; and I have advocated for eliminating subsidies to private insurance companies for providing the same services that Medicare already provides to seniors. These are all common-sense steps to reduce wasteful government spending.

This legislation sends a message to the American people that the government is committed to putting the country back on stable economic footing. I will vote for this bill and